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IMPERIAL PLOTS? SHUGBOROUGH, CHINOISERIE AND IMPERIAL IDEOLOGY IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH GARDENS

INTRODUCTION

Some of the more remarkable features of the mid-eighteenth-century British landscape were architectural structures understood by contemporary observers to be designed ‘in the Chinese taste’. Although relatively short-lived, the craze for what has become known as ‘chinoiserie’ in the garden yielded thousands of pavilions, temples, pagodas and bridges, only some of which still grace the grounds of country estates today. Existing scholarship, taking its lead from Hugh Honour’s classic 1961 study, has tended to interpret such structures as a purely European aesthetic that bore little or no relationship to Asia. For Honour, the designs referred not to China, but to ‘Cathay’, and ‘of this mysterious and charming land, poets are the only historians and porcelain painters the most reliable topographers’.¹ Dams and Zega agree that ‘the imaginary world of Cathay was a pure invention, a collective vision nurtured, embroidered and beloved by the European spirit’,² while for Jacobson, similarly, a chinoiserie garden building was ‘a folly, as delightfully Chinese as dragons, bells, fretwork, paper-mâché and paint could make it, the living embodiment of the pavilions on the Coromandel screen or porcelain plate’.³ In this context, scholars have generally accepted at face value eighteenth-century accounts that see chinoiserie as of ‘mighty whimsical Appearance’ but of no great social or cultural consequence.⁴ Such follies, in Honour’s analysis, were ‘merely incidental to the English park’, and intended only to provoke ‘a *frisson* of exotic delight’.⁵

A recent intervention by the art historian Stacey Sloboda represents a far more sophisticated reading of chinoiserie as ‘a critical visual and material language rather than a mute ornamental style’.⁶ Seeking to move beyond the purely aesthetic and instead to view objects and spaces as ‘cultural agents’, Sloboda sees garden structures in the Chinese taste as ‘signifier[s] of

fashion fuelled by imperial commerce that was embedded into the British landscape'.⁷ In this context, 'the ubiquitous Chinese bridge was a vehicle of imaginative, commercial excursion', and, as in the case of chinoiserie interiors, 'the emblematic landscape garden became a useful site for visualizing imperial ideology'.⁸ The particular case that Sloboda uses to illustrate this visualization of imperial ideology is that of Shugborough, Staffordshire, on which stands a 'Chinese House' (1747-8), a structure inextricably linked to the life and career of George, Lord Anson (1697-1762), and surely one of the most fascinating material expressions of the eighteenth-century Sino-British encounter in existence.

Sloboda's insistence that we take chinoiserie objects seriously as cultural agents, rather than continue to regard them as 'merely incidental' fantasies, is extremely welcome, and I find a number of her arguments to be useful and convincing. A historian, however, inevitably brings a slightly different perspective to the topic, and my own research, which contextualises landscape chinoiserie as part of the longer history of Sino-British encounters, produces a rather different conclusion with regard to imperial ideology. This article, then, argues that the Shugborough Chinese House represents an exceptional instance of landscape chinoiserie, and that, examined in historical perspective, the particular circumstances of its production and reception argue strongly against reading it as representative of the phenomenon as it emerged and developed during the mid-eighteenth century. Lord Anson's unique relationship with China, and his own place within the emerging British imperial project, clearly distinguish him from other producers and consumers of chinoiserie of the period. For Sloboda, eighteenth-century chinoiserie was linked to 'a developing notion of the Chinese as synonymous with the concepts of hybridity, disorder, and illegibility'.⁹ Yet hybridity and illegibility are consistently denied in the case of the Shugborough Chinese House, for which observers, unusually, made repeated, explicit claims of cultural authenticity. While Sloboda's argument with regard to Shugborough is convincing, the imperial ideology she finds manifest in that garden cannot so easily be foisted onto the wider mid-eighteenth-century British context, a context characterised by far more nuanced and ambivalent attitudes towards the foreign,

and towards China in particular. Most tellingly, the fact that the high-water mark of the British imperialist presence in China from the middle decades of the nineteenth century onwards essentially coincided with the disappearance of chinoiserie from British gardens argues strongly against reading imperial ideology of the type associated with Edward Said back into earlier manifestations of this cultural phenomenon.¹⁰

LORD ANSON & THE CHINESE HOUSE

Although a smaller version of the estate had been purchased in 1624 by William Anson (d. 1644) of Dunston, Staffordshire, and a modest two-storied house constructed there in 1695, the story of Shugborough as we now know it is very much an eighteenth-century one.¹¹ Thomas Anson (1695-1773), who would become a founder member of the Society of Dilettanti in 1732 and Member of Parliament for Lichfield in 1747, inherited the estate on the death of his father William (1656-1720) in 1720, and, from the late 1730s onwards, slowly began to acquire the surrounding properties. But it was the triumphant return of Thomas's younger brother Commodore George, soon Admiral Lord Anson, from a circumnavigation of the globe in 1744 that allowed major alterations to the house and estate to begin in earnest. The capture in 1743 of the Spanish galleon *Nuestra Señora de Covadonga*, loaded with American silver, had made the Commodore a wealthy man, and his vast fortune seems to have financed much of the early work at Shugborough.¹² Although George and his wife Elizabeth (1725-1760) lived at Moor Park, Hertfordshire, from 1752, Shugborough remained very much at the centre of family life.

By his own account, Lord Anson had spent several exasperating months in Canton (Guangzhou) during 1742 and 1743 dealing with obstinate and obstructive Chinese mandarins, and his impressions of China and its people were not positive. When the authorized account of the expedition, *A Voyage Round the World*, appeared in May 1748, it represented one of the most

hostile depictions of Chinese people and culture yet to appear in print.¹³ Anson had been particularly vexed by the issue of port duties, which Chinese officials attempted to extract from the British flagship as it towed the Spanish galleon into the mouth of the Pearl River in 1743, while he maintained that as commander of a man-of-war, he ‘was prohibited from trading, and had nothing to do with customs or duties of any kind’.¹⁴ ‘In artifice, falsehood, and an attachment to all kinds of lucre, many of the Chinese are difficult to be paralleled by any other people’, he fumed, noting too that this newly-revealed ‘truth’ about the Chinese was ‘so contradictory to the character given of them in the legendary accounts of the *Romish* Missionaries’.¹⁵

Anson had reserved particular scorn for Chinese artists and craftsmen, labouring ‘under that poverty of genius, which constantly attends all servile imitators’, and whose skills were easily surpassed by their Japanese and European counterparts.¹⁶ Such a statement makes it all the more remarkable, then, that among the first of Shugborough’s new garden structures was none other than a ‘Chinese House’ (Figure 1), complete with boat and boathouse, placed on an island in an artificial canal to the north of the estate, and in place by 1748 when ‘a Chinese summerhouse’ is described by the visiting Philip Yorke (1720-1790) as ‘a very pretty object’.¹⁷ Originally approached by a pair of bridges, also of Chinese design, the exterior of the house was painted pale blue and white with fret patterns, no longer visible but confirmed in an unpublished journal entry by John Parnell (1744-1801), which describes the arrangement as ‘a Double Bridge to an Island on which is Erected a chinese House Painted Blue and Whyte with Indian Birds, mandarins &c very well for the Purpose’.¹⁸ Parnell’s accompanying sketch (Figure 2) also confirms the original double-bridged layout, while the boat and boathouse are clearly visible in a watercolour (c. 1780) by Moses Griffith (1747-1819), which hangs in the Verandah Passage of the Mansion House (Figure 3). Since the flood of 1795 and the rerouting of the River Sow, the Chinese House no longer stands on an island, but on a small promontory, now adorned with a new red iron bridge built by Charles Heywood in 1813. The roof is crowned with a two-tier finial and upturned eaves. Repairs must have been undertaken during the twentieth century, as a photograph taken by Osvald Sirén in the late 1940s

shows considerable damage to the underside of the roof.¹⁹ The building was originally set amongst larches, which Parnell thought were ‘here justly Placed as being Indian trees’.²⁰

The original light turquoise colour scheme has largely survived inside the Chinese House, which contains a separate alcove decorated with red lacquer fretwork and golden monkeys flying kites of birds. Although the contents of the house, including the rococo plasterwork ceiling (*c.* 1748; now in the Verandah Room) were later removed to the Mansion House, for eighteenth-century visitors the house and the Chinese decorative objects it contained would have been experienced together as a separate realm of ‘Chineseness’, a practice that had a long history in Britain, as Stacey Pierson has shown.²¹ Parnell’s journal confirms that the house was filled with ‘Indian Pictures & china vases & other Elegant pieces of chinese workmanship’.²² References to decoration and furniture in the Ansons’ correspondence of 1747-8 suggest that many of these pieces arrived only during the building’s construction. A letter from Thomas to George, for example, records that ‘the three Chinese Lanthorns’ arrived safely in October 1747.²³ Another letter from the following year states of the Chinese House that ‘we propose to take Advantage of Lady Anson’s [being] here to finish it’.²⁴ Such an association of chinoiserie and femininity was conventional for the period, although in practice, as Amanda Vickery has argued, the gender divisions underpinning this stereotype were not as rigid as some sources might indicate.²⁵

Eileen Harris has attributed the design of the Chinese House to Thomas Wright (1711-1786), based on his personal connections with the Anson family, his ‘not dissimilar conjunction’ of a Chinese temple and bridge at Beckett Park, Berkshire, and his redesign of Wrest Park from 1748.²⁶ An illustration in the sketchbook by Wright held at the Avery Architectural Library at Columbia University shows a pavilion and bridge in the Chinese taste, but this does not match the building at Shugborough.²⁷ Although several other of his designs in the Chinese taste dating from the early 1750s, including that of Swangrove House at Badminton, and a remarkable ‘Chinese’ pleasure barge designed (*c.* 1750) for Frederick, Prince of Wales (1707-1751), all suggest that he

would have been capable of executing such a commission, Michael Cousins has now shown that Wright is unlikely to have visited Shugborough – if at all – prior to the 1750s.²⁸

Shugborough also boasted a pagoda (c. 1752), clearly visible in *A View of Shugborough and the Park from the East* by Nicholas Thomas Dall (d. 1776), which now hangs in the Swallow Passage of the Mansion House. A letter of November 1752 confirms that the ‘skeleton’ of the pagoda had been completed by that date, and both Philip Yorke and his wife Jemima, Marchioness Grey (1732-1797), mention the completed pagoda in their correspondence of August 1763.²⁹ Parnell records the ‘very Pretty’ pagoda in his journal of 1769.³⁰ This structure is sometimes said to have been destroyed in the floods of 1795, although there is evidence to suggest that it had become structurally unsound before this date.³¹ The Chinese House had by this time also been joined by a number of architectural features in a more classical style, many by James ‘Athenian’ Stuart (1713-1798), after the designs in his *The Antiquities of Athens* (1762; co-authored with Nicholas Revett, 1720-1804), of which both Thomas and George Anson had been subscribers to the first edition.³² The juxtaposition of buildings in the Chinese taste and those in a classical style can partly be explained by the competing interests of the two Anson brothers, but the sight of a Chinese building surrounded by classical ruins was far from unique in mid-eighteenth-century Britain. William Gilpin (1724-1804) was one unimpressed observer, describing the garden layout as ‘rather absurd’,³³ while John Parnell thought the similar conjunction at Kew ‘an amazing absurdity’, adding that ‘Where different nations are thus introduced into an improvement they should at least be hid from one another by an hill, wood or clump of trees, that, as we walk from one before we have a view of the other, the fancy may have room to change to that country, where the building supposes us to be.’³⁴

SHUGBOROUGH & IMPERIAL IDEOLOGY

Sloboda argues that ‘the goal of creating a landscape that expressed the Ansons’ taste, experiences, and upwardly mobile social status was fundamentally connected with imperial ideology’.³⁵ The Chinese buildings at Shugborough, she contends, ‘effaced the political difficulties Anson experienced in Canton’ and rewrote his encounter with Chinese officialdom in his own terms, with chinoiserie in this context providing ‘a language through which imperial victory could be spoken’.³⁶ In the case of Shugborough, I find this argument extremely convincing, and indeed, much of what I present below supports this reading. Anson’s voyage had been far from an unproblematic success. Of approximately 1,854 men who sailed in 1740, at least 1,385 had lost their lives, mainly from fever, starvation, vitamin deficiencies and dysentery.³⁷ Days after Anson’s triumphant return in 1744 *The Daily Post* asked ‘deluded Britons’ whether they should really ‘boast of treasure, purchased at a treble cost’ of the men who had not returned.³⁸ Most significantly, the Commodore’s alleged ‘victory’ over obstinate Chinese officials at Canton in 1743 is not entirely supported by the various published and unpublished accounts written by other eyewitnesses.³⁹ The cultural appropriation inherent in the construction of the Chinese House gave Anson an element of control over his transactions at Canton, as did the authorized written account of the circumnavigation, which Glyndwr Williams has demonstrated ‘should be regarded as an apologia for Anson’s own conduct rather than as an impartial memoir of the expedition’.⁴⁰

When examined in historical context, however, the case for extending this imperialist reading to garden chinoiserie in general is considerably more problematic, given the place of the phenomenon in the longer history of Sino-British encounters. Decorative objects depicting Chinese gardens, temples, pagodas and bridges had been known to European consumers long before Commodore Anson’s unhappy stay at Canton in 1743. The first shipments of Chinese porcelain and other objects to arrive in Europe at the turn of the seventeenth century had caused a sensation, but a century later this type of item was de rigueur of the fashionable abode. By 1700, John Evelyn (1620-1706) could remark of the ‘very noble, & wonderfully well furnished house’ of Samuel Pepys (1633-1703) at Clapham, that ‘Indys & Chineze Curiositys’ were ‘almost any where

to be mett with'.⁴¹ Seven years earlier, in 1693, Evelyn had seen the 'China, & Indian Cabinets, Schreens & Hangings' in the collection of Queen Mary, an early recorded English example of Chinese painted papers being used to decorate interior walls, a practice that had developed into 'wallpaper' manufactured specifically for the purpose by the middle of the eighteenth century.⁴² Idealized garden scenes in various incarnations made up the majority of these papers, which were distributed through the firms of London and soon imitated by local designers: a certain James Minnikin of St. Martins le Grand was advertising locally-manufactured 'Japan' paperhangings as early as 1680.⁴³

The late seventeenth century had also marked the beginning of interest in the Chinese garden itself, and Sir William Temple's (1628-1699) classic essay of 1685, in which he contrasted the regular forms of European gardens with the designed irregularity of their Chinese counterparts, 'where the Beauty shall be great, and strike the Eye, but without any Order or Disposition of Parts, that shall be commonly or easily observ'd', became highly influential to a generation of British intellectuals.⁴⁴ Joseph Addison's (1672-1719) *Spectator* essay of 1712 echoed Temple's account of the Chinese, who chose 'to shew a Genius in Works of this Nature, and therefore always conceal the Art by which they direct themselves', adding that 'I would rather look upon a Tree in all its Luxuriancy and Diffusion of Boughs and Branches, than when it is...cut and trimmed into a Mathematical Figure'.⁴⁵ Some early eighteenth-century commentators saw parallels in the way classical and Chinese gardens were laid out. In 1728, probably drawing on Temple and Addison, Robert Castell (d. 1729) expressed the view that the designer of Pliny's garden at Tuscum had been 'not unacquainted' with the manner of the Chinese garden, in which, 'tho' the Parts are disposed with the greatest Art, the Irregularity is still preserved; so that their Manner may not improperly be said to be an artful Confusion'. This manner was surely to be preferred over gardens that show too much artifice, as 'it cannot be supposed that Nature ever did or will produce Trees in the Form of Beasts, or Letters, or any Resemblance of Embroidery, which imitations rather belong to the Statuary, and Workers with the Needle than the Architect; and tho' pleasing in those Arts, appear

monstrous in this'.⁴⁶ By 1734, Sir Thomas Robinson (1703-1777) could confidently claim that this Chinese style of landscaping had arrived in Britain, citing among others Lord Cobham's gardens at Stowe.⁴⁷

Stowe was also among the first exemplars of the brief but intense craze for chinoiserie garden architecture, as its Chinese House ('a house built on piles, after the manner of the Chinese, odd & Pretty enough') is recorded in a visitor's record of 1738.⁴⁸ The Chinese House at Woburn, Bedfordshire appears on a 1738 estate map.⁴⁹ Estate accounts list lead intended for the roof of the Chinese House at Wroxton being purchased in 1739/40,⁵⁰ and in a letter of 1753, Horace Walpole (1717-1797) claims that the Chinese buildings and bridges there were 'of the very first' to appear in Britain.⁵¹ A set of anonymous paintings of Grove House, Old Windsor, show that several chinoiserie architectural features, including a very strange farmhouse, were in place there by 1741.⁵² A 'Chinese house of pyramidical form' was being planned for Studley Royal in Yorkshire as early as September 1744, when the site was visited by Philip Yorke.⁵³ A chinoiserie garden that included a pagoda was laid out at Marybone House, Gloucester, between 1744 and 1748.⁵⁴ These examples were no doubt mutually generating and reinforcing, but may also have been given impetus by the publication in 1735 of Jean-Baptiste Du Halde's (1674-1743) highly-influential *La Description de la Chine*.⁵⁵

But by the mid-1750s, when a chinoiserie fret bridge even spanned the Thames at Hampton Court,⁵⁶ the style had already become all too clichéd, as Robert Lloyd's (1733-1764) poetic send-up of 1757 suggests: 'The trav'ler with amazement sees / A temple, Gothic, or Chinese, / With many a bell, and tawdry rag on, / And crested with a sprawling dragon; / A wooden arch is bent astride / A ditch of water, four foot wide, / With angles, curves, and zigzag lines, / From Halfpenny's exact designs'.⁵⁷ William (d. 1755) and John Halfpenny's (*fl.* 1740s-1750s) four-part *Rural Architecture in the Chinese Taste* (1750-52) was only one of the numerous chinoiserie design manuals that emerged in this period, just as the once-fashionable style had begun to edge towards the vulgar. In 1753 Walpole remarked grumpily that the 'paltry' Chinese buildings at Wroxton

‘have the merit or demerit of being the progenitors of a very numerous race all over the kingdom’.⁵⁸ Even the Marchioness Grey, once an enthusiastic admirer of the taste, was ‘almost tired of the Chinese’ style by 1756.⁵⁹

That the intense craze for chinoiserie in the garden had faded so significantly by the late 1750s problematizes any reading of the phenomenon as a manifestation of imperial ideology. While there is no doubt that the taste can be seen as a product of what Sloboda describes as ‘the increasingly international, commercial culture of eighteenth-century Britain’,⁶⁰ it was the East India Company (EIC), rather than the state, which pursued British commercial interests in China throughout this period. In contrast to its experience on the Indian subcontinent after 1757, the EIC’s trading relationship with the Qing Empire was still tightly controlled, restricted to the port of Canton and conducted entirely according to Chinese dictates until well into the nineteenth century, thus the asymmetry of power relations that for Mary Louise Pratt characterizes the contact zones of the colonial encounter was very much in the Chinese favour.⁶¹ Patrick Conner has observed that the vogue for garden structures in the Chinese taste ‘principally affected landowners who were wealthy, fashion-conscious and in close touch with the latest developments in the capital and its outskirts’, and was virtually unknown in Wales, Ireland and Scotland.⁶² The relative over-representation of Scots in what we might loosely term the British imperial project as it developed throughout the eighteenth century, viewed against the nearly complete absence of Scottish pagodas, temples and bridges in the Chinese taste, also cautions against uncritically linking chinoiserie to imperial ideology. Tellingly, while occasional examples of chinoiserie garden structures appeared during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, the establishment of a type of informal imperial presence in China after 1842 ‘broke the spell’ of the pagoda for the British, and the first Anglo-Chinese War (1839-42) ‘virtually marked the death of chinoiserie in Britain’, as Conner has shown.⁶³

Alfred Gell has demonstrated the impossibility of separating the aesthetic qualities of art objects from their specific social settings, and the inextricable link between the Shugborough

Chinese House and the life of Lord Anson makes that structure exceptional indeed.⁶⁴ Among the early adopters of chinoiserie garden features discussed above, Anson alone could claim to have had any first-hand experience of China, or, crucially, to have played any role within the expanding British imperial presence abroad. From the beginning, he sought special treatment from Chinese officials on the basis of his status in the Royal Navy, and the *Voyage Round the World* repeatedly refers to him as ‘an officer of the King of *Great Britain*’ to make clear the distinction between Anson and the EIC factors also in port.⁶⁵ His refusal to pay port duties was based on his ‘thinking it a Dishonour to the King my Master’,⁶⁶ and some contemporary accounts picked up on this idea that Anson ‘support[ed] the honour of his majesty’s flag in those far distant regions’.⁶⁷ The distinction is made so explicitly in the *Voyage* that in the twentieth century Maurice Collis could still claim that ‘as a Captain in the British Navy, [Anson] had no fancy to be confused with a merchant Captain, even by such people as the Chinese’.⁶⁸ Evidently, this feeling was mutual: recent evidence has shown that Anson’s attempted violations of the delicate trading protocols at Canton were seen as ignorant, embarrassing and disruptive in the eyes of EIC officials, one of whom was ‘greatly surprised at the Gloss [Anson] had put upon the Transactions at Canton’ in the authorized account of the expedition.⁶⁹ If, as I have argued elsewhere, Lord Anson’s experiences in Canton were exceptional in the history of the eighteenth-century Sino-British encounter,⁷⁰ he also represents an exception in the early history of garden chinoiserie, a fashion strongly associated with the minor gentry rather than the nobility, as John Harris has demonstrated.⁷¹

AUTHENTICITY & CULTURAL APPROPRIATION

Of what he calls the ‘flimsy fantasy of doll-like lovers, children, monkeys, and fishermen lolling about in pleasure gardens graced by eternal spring’ of eighteenth-century chinoiserie, David Porter argues that ‘there was no substance to such a vision and indeed no desire for substance’.⁷²

Contemporary observers, such as Walpole in 1750, were content simply to admire the ‘whimsical air of novelty that is very pleasing’ created by temples and bridges in the Chinese taste, without concerning themselves as to their likeness or otherwise to Asian models.⁷³ In this regard the Shugborough Chinese House is clearly distinguished from its eighteenth-century counterparts by the repeated and insistent claim of authenticity made of it by its owners and contemporary observers, such as Philip Yorke, who declared it ‘the most complete Chinese building I ever saw’ in August 1763.⁷⁴ This claim to authenticity was based on its supposedly having being built from a sketch drawn in China by Peircy Brett (1709-1781), one of the officers on the HMS *Centurion*, Commodore Anson’s flagship during the voyage of circumnavigation.⁷⁵ Sketches made by Brett had been the basis for the forty-two copper-plated engravings that illustrated the 1748 edition of the *Voyage Round the World*, when it had been a particular point of pride that these images ‘were not copied from the works of others, or composed at home from imperfect accounts given by incurious and unskilful observers, as hath been frequently the case in these matters; but the greatest part of them were drawn on the spot with the utmost exactness’.⁷⁶ The original design, which was held in a private collection, seems now to have been lost.⁷⁷ However, some involvement on Brett’s part is strongly suggested by Lady Anson’s correspondence of August 1750. A letter to Jemima Grey, describing the ‘several new ornaments and improvements adding daily’, observes that ‘Capt. Brett being now here, I design to have some Conversation with him about the Galley’.⁷⁸

A travel record of 1782 by Thomas Pennant (1726-1798), who is listed as a subscriber to the first edition of the *Voyage Round the World*, admires ‘the genuine architecture of *China*, in all its extravagance’, later adding that the Chinese House ‘is a true pattern of the architecture of that nation, taken in the country by the skilful pencil of Sir *Percy* [sic] *Brett*: not a mongrel invention of *British* carpenters’.⁷⁹ Pennant’s account proved highly influential, and his words would echo in the pages of Staffordshire gazetteers for the next sixty years. His observations on authenticity and the attribution of the design to Brett were reprinted in William Mavor’s *British Tourists* of 1798,⁸⁰ and were then repeated verbatim in William Pitt’s *Topographical History of Staffordshire*, and Clifford and

Clifford's *Topographical and Historical Description of the Parish of Tixall*, both of 1817.⁸¹ William White's *History, Gazetteer, and Directory, of Staffordshire* of 1834 likewise repeats the claim that the Chinese House is 'a true pattern of the architecture of that nation',⁸² while a decade later Robert Garner's *Natural History of the County of Stafford* described 'a Chinese house, with its ornaments and furniture quite in character'.⁸³

The degree to which the Chinese House at Shugborough actually incorporates design elements that might be considered genuinely 'Chinese' is not my concern here. Oliver Impey has already noted that the windows and door are clearly of European proportions, while Honour considered the interior 'as delightful a specimen of mongrel chinoiserie as ever appeared in England'.⁸⁴ The eighteenth- (and early nineteenth-) century claim to authenticity, however, is highly significant, in that it distinguishes the Shugborough Chinese House from other garden structures in a way that was recognized by contemporary observers. Nightingale's 1813 description of Shugborough, for example, after repeating much of Pennant's observation, adds that:

If noblemen and other gentlemen of large landed property would devote a portion of their possessions to the erection of such genuine specimens of foreign architecture as this Chinese building, they would render most important additions to the knowledge of those persons who have not opportunities of travelling, and who at present are compelled to receive their information on this and other interesting subjects from the imperfect and ignorant second-hand descriptions of careless, tasteless, and often absurd, travellers.⁸⁵

The Shugborough Chinese House is here understood as a distinct category of cultural object, one that for Nightingale more closely resembles a souvenir than meaningless decoration (this is also implied by the addition of a biography of Admiral Anson to Nightingale's description of the estate).⁸⁶

In a thoughtful analysis, Susan Stewart describes the souvenir as an object that ‘allow[s] the tourist to appropriate, consume, and thereby “tame” the cultural other’.⁸⁷ This sense of ‘taming’ at Shugborough is captured in part of an anonymous, undated poem in the Staffordshire Record Office, probably by Sneyd Davies (1709-1769): ‘Here mayst thou oft regale in Leric Bow’r, / Secure of Mandarins’ despotic Pow’r; / Behold thy Eastern structures rise, nor fear / The Sultan’s frown, or Turban’d Officer. / Safe from their servile yoke, their arts command, / And Grecian Domes erect in Freedom’s Land’.⁸⁸ With Anson depicted as master of Eastern culture while beyond the reach of despotic Chinese officialdom, the poem evokes ‘the romance of contraband’ that Stewart sees as inherent in the souvenir.⁸⁹ Here, the claim to authenticity made of the Chinese House is a crucial component of the process of cultural appropriation, with its attendant implications of mastery and unequal power relations.⁹⁰

Yet in this regard, Shugborough was very much the exception. An eighteenth-century chinoiserie house was far more likely to combine aspects of classical tradition with Gothic, Chinese and Dutch decorative elements, such as Bateman’s ‘distinctly cosmopolitan’ Chinese House at Old Windsor.⁹¹ One contemporary observer cited by Sloboda describes this structure as ‘half-gothic, half attick, half Chinese, and completely fribble’.⁹² The inherent hybridity of the style seems to have been understood by eighteenth-century observers. A correspondent to *The World* in 1753 had it that:

According to the present prevailing whim, every thing is Chinese, or in the Chinese taste; or, as it is sometimes more modestly expressed, *partly after the Chinese manner*....[W]ithout-doors so universally has it spread, that every gate to a cow-yard is in T’s and Z’s, and every hovel for the cows has bells hanging at the corners....[O]n a moderate computation, not one in a thousand of all the stiles, gates, rails, pales, chairs, temples, chimney-pieces, &c. &c. which are called Chinese, has the least resemblance to any thing that China ever saw....[O]ur Chinese ornaments are not only of our own manufacture, like our French silks

and our French wines, but, what has seldom been attributed to the English, of our own invention.⁹³

A decade later, Goldsmith's fictional Chinese traveller Lien Chi Altangi would disappoint his host, 'a lady of distinction', by observing that the temple in her garden might 'as well be called an Egyptian pyramid as a Chinese temple; for that little building in view is as like the one as t'other'.⁹⁴

As I suggested in a preliminary version of this article, the repeated insistence on cultural authenticity that surrounds the Shugborough Chinese House links that structure to the Chinese buildings at Kew designed by William Chambers (1723-1796), and it is telling, therefore, that Kew is the other example cited by Sloboda to link chinoiserie to imperial ideology.⁹⁵ Chambers was equally preoccupied with issues of cultural authenticity, and his stated objective in the publication of his 1757 *Designs of Chinese Buildings* was to 'put a stop to the extravagancies that daily appear under the name of Chinese'.⁹⁶ This is supported by the intriguing (although contested) suggestion that Chambers tried to distance himself from his earlier design of the House of Confucius at Kew, which was in place at its original site by 1749.⁹⁷ Sloboda demonstrates convincingly that Kew was 'a celebration of British imperial, agricultural, and industrial power', and links its creation to British naval success in the Seven Years' War.⁹⁸ But the royal patronage Chambers enjoyed places him and Kew itself in a unique position in the history of eighteenth-century chinoiserie, and naturalizes its manifestation of imperial ideology. The garden and even the subsequent publication were 'undertaken by Royal Command, and nobly paid for by Royal Bounty'.⁹⁹ Moreover, as several scholars including Sloboda have noted, Chambers's designs disappointed his contemporaries by their lack of exoticism, and had a negligible impact on architecture in Britain.¹⁰⁰ As Impey has observed, 'people knew exactly what they wanted a "Chinese" building to be, light, frivolous, immediately pretty and gaily coloured, and they had no use for Chambers' solemn pronouncements on inaccuracy'.¹⁰¹

Much like the Shugborough Chinese House, the supposed authenticity of Chambers's designs at Kew was more rhetoric than reality, and Sloboda perceptively points out that the generally-accepted view of Chambers's designs as being based on his first-hand observations in China is to a large degree overstated.¹⁰² But it is precisely this discourse of authenticity that separates these two cases from the thousands of other bridges, temples and pagodas that decorated the mid-eighteenth-century British landscape. Porter argues that the majority of eighteenth-century chinoiserie collectors 'were content simply to enjoy a delicious surrender to the unremitting exoticism of total illegibility',¹⁰³ and yet, repeated claims as to the authenticity of the Chinese House suggest that at Shugborough, a type of legibility *was* valued. If Sloboda is correct that referring to an object as 'Chinese' in eighteenth-century Britain 'referred less to stylistic or material origin, and more to a developing notion of the Chinese as synonymous with the concepts of hybridity, disorder, and illegibility',¹⁰⁴ then the Shugborough Chinese House is perhaps better understood as operating outside of that system of cultural signs.

CONCLUSION: CHINOISERIE & IMPERIAL IDEOLOGY IN THE BRITISH LANDSCAPE

That the garden has the potential to embody a form of national or imperial ideology has been well established elsewhere.¹⁰⁵ The formal gardens of seventeenth-century Versailles contained collections of exotic plants, shells and rocks that Chandra Mukerji has demonstrated 'made manifest the geographical and cultural reach of the French state'.¹⁰⁶ An early eighteenth-century treatise hoped that a better understanding of garden design would allow Britain 'to excel the so-much-boasted Gardens of *France*, and make that great Nation give way to the superiour Beauties of our Gardens, as their late Prince has to the invincible Force of the British Arms', an association

that neatly articulates the relationship between culture and power that underpins Said's original conception of Orientalism.¹⁰⁷ That relationship inevitably affected British perceptions of Chinese garden culture, and in the drastically-altered political climate of the mid-nineteenth century, accounts shifted far from the admiring passages of earlier periods. Temple had enthusiastically praised the designed irregularity of the Chinese garden in 1685, but by 1834, this characteristic had become 'ridiculously fantastic' to Western observers, the obvious conclusion of which, for J. C. Loudon, was that 'Chinese taste in gardening ... partakes of the general character of the people, and is characterised by their leading feature, peculiarity'.¹⁰⁸

Such statements, in which backward Chinese landscape practices are mirrored by backward Chinese racial qualities, are now all too obviously complicit in the development of an Orientalist system of knowledge that, in a Saidian interpretation, underpinned the British imperialist presence in China for the remainder of the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, as Loudon's account was published, Lord Anson's negative views and experiences of China from a century earlier were being enthusiastically reprised by nineteenth-century commentators seeking to justify British military intervention in China on the eve of the First Anglo-Chinese War (1839-42).¹¹⁰ But this kind of imperial ideology fits far less easily onto the mid-eighteenth-century social and cultural milieu that produced the chinoiserie garden architecture craze, and as David Porter has warned, there is a danger in reading 'too much of the Victorian era's imperial triumphalism' back into eighteenth-century cultural history.¹¹¹ Elsewhere, Eugenia Zuroski Jenkins highlights the fluidity and instability of the meaning of words like 'china' and 'chinaware' in eighteenth-century literary texts, and she treats Chineseness 'as an English literary effect that is ascribed to objects rather than an ethnic quality that inheres in objects'.¹¹² This is clearly similar to the theoretical approach that Sloboda brings to her own study, but as Jenkins shows, such a reading of chinoiserie necessarily removes it from any concern with cultural authenticity. An outlier in its eighteenth-century context, the Shugborough Chinese House has more in common with the post-1980 fashion for Chinese-style gardens in the Western world, for which an obsessive concern with authenticity has also been

apparent, a form of cultural essentialism that, although very different in intention, shares much with the more explicitly racist Orientalist discourse of the nineteenth century.

In the introduction to an important collection of essays published late last century, W. J. T. Mitchell asked readers to think not only about what landscape is, but also about what it *does*. Landscape, he suggested, is not the mere symbol of power relations, but is itself an ‘instrument of cultural power’.¹¹³ Sloboda’s reading of chinoiserie in the eighteenth-century British landscape in terms of ‘cultural agency’ is an important development, but as we continue to think about the meaning of these structures we should be mindful of the roles of specific actors and social settings in the ways in which that agency operates. Elsewhere, Robert Batchelor and Tim Richardson have clearly demonstrated the link between chinoiserie garden structures and the political opposition to the Robert Walpole regime of the early eighteenth century.¹¹⁴ But domestic self-fashioning of this kind involved a complex system of signs that would certainly not have been legible to all observers in the same way. The eighteenth-century improvements at Shugborough discussed in this article had necessitated the forced relocation of a whole village – as one early nineteenth-century description casually remarked, ‘the old village of Shugborough, which stood inconveniently near, has been entirely removed to a distant eminence’.¹¹⁵ We can be sure that the affected villagers, perhaps more than anyone else, would have understood the expanding estate as a manifestation of power, even if their experience of that power required no knowledge of the Chinese architecture contained therein.

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NOTES

¹ Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay* (London, 1961), pp. 5-6.

² Bernd H. Dams and Andrew Zega, *Chinoiseries* (New York, 2008), p. 18.

³ Dawn Jacobson, *Chinoiserie* (London, 1993), p. 156.

⁴ William Gilpin, *A Dialogue upon the Gardens of the Right Honourable the Lord Viscount Cobham, at Stowe in Buckinghamshire* (London, 1748), pp. 26-8.

⁵ Honour, *Chinoiserie*, p. 149.

⁶ Stacey Sloboda, *Chinoiserie: Commerce and Critical Ornament in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Manchester, 2014), p. 6.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 169-74.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁰ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London, 1978).

¹¹ The best single treatment of the garden at Shugborough is Michael Cousins, 'Shugborough: A "Perfect Paradise"', *Garden History*, 43(1) 2015, pp. 33-73.

¹² On the circumnavigation see Glyn Williams, *The Prize of All the Oceans: The Triumph and Tragedy of Anson's Voyage Round the World* (London, 1999).

¹³ Richard Walter (comp.), *A Voyage Round the World in the Years MDCCXL, I, II, III, IV by George Anson, esq.* (London, 1748). On the complicated question of the authorship of this work see Williams, *Prize of All the Oceans*, pp. 237-41.

¹⁴ Walter (comp.), *Voyage Round the World*, pp. 386-7.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 392-3.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 411. For a discussion of this aspect of Anson's account, see Anne Gerritsen and Stephen McDowall, 'Material Culture and the Other: European Encounters with Chinese Porcelain, ca. 1650-1800', *Journal of World History*, 23(1) 2012, pp. 107-9.

¹⁷ Joyce Godber, *The Marchioness Grey of Wrest Park* (Bedford, 1968), p. 137.

¹⁸ John Parnell, 'Journal of a Tour thro' Wales and England, Anno 1769', London School of Economics & Political Science Library Collections, Coll. Misc. 0038, vol. 1, f. 52r.

¹⁹ Osvald Sirén, *China and Gardens of Europe of the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1950), plate 73B.

²⁰ Parnell, 'Journal of a Tour', f. 53r.

²¹ Stacey Pierson, *Collectors, Collections and Museums: The Field of Chinese Ceramics in Britain* (Bern, 2007), p. 29. 1885 is usually said to have been the date of the removal of the Chinese objects and the ceiling, although Michael Cousins ('Shugborough', p. 39) has convincingly posited a later date.

²² Parnell, 'Journal of a Tour', f. 52r.

²³ Thomas Anson to George Anson, 12 Oct 1747, British Library Add. MS 15955, f. 60r.

²⁴ Thomas Anson to George Anson, undated (after 24 Oct 1748), British Library Add. MS 15955, f. 85v.

²⁵ Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven, 2009), pp. 20-1. For an earlier reminder of the possibly under-acknowledged role of men in the acquisition of material possessions in eighteenth-century Britain, see Margot Finn, 'Men's Things: Masculine Possession in the Consumer Revolution', *Social History* 25(2) 2000, pp. 133-55. Other important studies of gender in this context include Tillman W. Nechtman, *Nabobs: Empire and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 2010), Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects:*

Women, Shopping, and Business in the Eighteenth Century (New York, 1997) and David Porter, *The Chinese Taste in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 2010).

²⁶ Eileen Harris, 'A Flair for the Grandiose: The Architecture of Thomas Wright – II', *Country Life*, 2 Sept 1971, pp. 546-50; Thomas Wright, *Arbours and Grottos*, Eileen Harris (ed.) (London, 1979). This work is a facsimile reproduction of Wright's *Universal Architecture* (1755 and 1758).

²⁷ Michael McCarthy, 'Thomas Wright's "Designs for Temples" and Related Drawings for Garden Buildings', *Journal of Garden History*, 1(1) 1981, pp. 55-66 (figure 13).

²⁸ Wright, *Arbours and Grottos* (no page numbers); Cousins, 'Shugborough', pp. 45-7.

²⁹ Staffordshire Record Office, D615/P(S)/1/4/75; Godber, *Marchioness Grey*, pp. 73, 161.

³⁰ Parnell, 'Journal of a Tour', f. 61r.

³¹ Cousins, 'Shugborough', p. 65.

³² On the Stuart designs at Shugborough and their relationship to those in *The Antiquities of Athens* see Alexander Marr, 'The Garden Buildings' in Susan Weber Soros (ed.), *James "Athenian" Stuart, 1713-1788: The Rediscovery of Antiquity* (New Haven, 2006), pp. 316-52, David Watkin, *Athenian Stuart: Pioneer of the Greek Revival* (London, 1982), pp. 25-8, and Lesley Lawrence, 'Stuart and Revett: Their Literary and Architectural Careers', *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, 2(2) 1938, pp. 128-46.

³³ William Gilpin, *Observations, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in the Year 1772, on Several Parts of England* (London, 1786), vol. 1, pp. 64-5.

³⁴ John Parnell, 'An Account of the Many Fine Seats of Nobles I have seen, with other Observations made during my Residence in England in 1763', quoted in James Sambrook, 'Wooburn Farm in the 1760's', *Garden History*, 7(2) 1979, p. 94.

³⁵ Sloboda, *Chinoiserie*, p. 177.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

³⁷ James Watt, 'The Medical Bequest of Disaster at Sea: Commodore Anson's Circumnavigation, 1740-44', *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of London*, 32(6) 1998, pp. 572-9.

³⁸ *The Daily Post*, 6 July 1744, quoted in Glyndwr Williams (ed.), *Documents Relating to Anson's Voyage Round the World, 1740-1744* (London, 1967), p. 237.

³⁹ Stephen McDowall, 'The Shugborough Dinner Service and Its Significance for Sino-British History', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 37(1) 2014, pp. 1-17.

⁴⁰ Williams (ed.), *Documents*, p. vii.

⁴¹ John Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn*, E. S. de Beer (ed.) (Oxford, 1955), vol. 5, pp. 427-8.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁴³ E. A. Entwisle, *The Book of Wallpaper: A History and an Appreciation* (London, 1954), p. 46. In their *Chinese Wallpaper in National Trust Houses* (Swindon, 2014), Emile de Bruijn, Andrew Bush and Helen Clifford suggest (p. 5) that around 60% of Chinese wallpapers in British and Irish country houses depicted idealized landscape scenes.

⁴⁴ William Temple, 'Upon the Gardens of Epicurus; or, of Gardening, in the Year 1685', in *The Works of Sir William Temple, Bart. in Two Volumes* (London, 1720), vol. 1, p. 186.

⁴⁵ Joseph Addison, 'On the Pleasures of the Imagination', *The Spectator*, 25 June 1712, reprinted in Donald F. Bond (ed.), *The Spectator* (Oxford, 1965), vol. 3, pp. 548-53.

⁴⁶ Robert Castell, *The Villas of the Ancients Illustrated* (London, 1728), pp. 116-18.

⁴⁷ Sir Thomas Robinson to Lord Carlisle, 23 December 1734, cited in Robert Batchelor, 'Concealing the Bounds: Imagining the British Nation through China', in Felicity A. Nussbaum (ed.), *The Global Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore, 2003), p. 84.

⁴⁸ Patrick Conner, *Oriental Architecture in the West* (London, 1979), p. 45.

⁴⁹ Bedfordshire & Luton Archives and Records Service R1/237, cited in Patrick Conner, 'Chinese Themes in 18th Century Gardens', in David Beevers (ed.), *Chinese Whispers: Chinoiserie in Britain, 1650-1930* (Brighton, 2008), p. 56.

⁵⁰ John Cornforth, 'Wroxton Abbey, Oxfordshire II', *Country Life*, 10 September 1981, pp. 854-7.

⁵¹ Horace Walpole to John Chute, 4 August 1753, in W. S. Lewis (ed.), *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence, Volume 35* (London, 1973), p. 74.

⁵² John Harris, 'A Pioneer in Gardening: Dickie Bateman Re-assessed', *Apollo* (October 1993), pp. 227-33. The farmhouse (see figure 2) hardly appears 'Chinese' to modern eyes, but a contemporary observer, Richard Pococke, considered the house and surrounds to be 'in the Chinese taste'. See *The Travels throughout England of Dr. Richard Pococke*, James Joel Cartwright (ed.) (Westminster, 1888-9), vol. 2, pp. 64-5.

⁵³ Godber, *Marchioness Grey*, p. 132.

⁵⁴ John Harris, "'Gardenesque': The Case of Charles Greville's Garden at Gloucester", *Journal of Garden History* 1(2) 1981, pp. 167-78.

⁵⁵ Conner, *Oriental Architecture*, p. 49; Emile de Bruijn, 'Found in Translation: The Chinese House at Stowe', *Apollo* (June 2007), p. 53. Du Halde's vast compendium was published in English the following year under the title *The General History of China* (London, 1736).

⁵⁶ The bridge, designed by Samuel Stevens and Benjamin Ludgator, was opened in December 1753. See a 1754 drawing by Canaletto in the British Museum (Prints & Drawings, Pp,5.146).

⁵⁷ Robert Lloyd, 'The Cit's Country Box' in *The Poetical Works of Robert Lloyd, A.M.* (London, 1774), vol. 1, pp. 41-6.

⁵⁸ Walpole to Chute, 4 August 1753, p. 74.

⁵⁹ Conner, *Oriental Architecture*, p. 68.

⁶⁰ Sloboda, *Chinoiserie*, p. 2.

⁶¹ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, second edition (New York, 2008), p. 8. On the restrictions of the trading relationship, see Paul A. Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700-1845* (Hong Kong, 2005).

⁶² Conner, *Oriental Architecture*, p. 50.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 161. On Britain's 'informal' empire in China, see Jürgen Osterhammel, 'Britain and China, 1842-1914', in Andrew Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Vol. III: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 146-69.

⁶⁴ Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford, 1998).

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- ⁶⁵ Walter (comp.), *Voyage Round the World*, pp. 408-9 (emphasis in the original).
- ⁶⁶ George Anson to Piercy [sic] Brett, 30 Sept 1743. British Library Add. MS 15855, ff. 151b-152a.
- ⁶⁷ Thomas Mortimer, *The British Plutarch; or, Biographical Entertainer* (London, 1762), vol. 12, p. 156.
- ⁶⁸ Maurice Collis, *The Great Within* (London, 1941), p. 228.
- ⁶⁹ Edward Page, 'A Little Secret History of Affairs at Canton in the Year 1743 when the *Centurion*, Commodore Anson Was Lying in the River', 18 November 1765, Oregon Historical Society MS 2894, p. 48; Williams, *Prize of All the Oceans*, pp. 176-200.
- ⁷⁰ McDowall, 'Shugborough Dinner Service'.
- ⁷¹ Harris, "'Gardenesque'", p. 167.
- ⁷² David Porter, *Ideographia: The Chinese Cipher in Early Modern Europe* (Stanford, 2001), p. 135.
- ⁷³ Horace Walpole to Horrace Mann, 2 August 1750. See W. S. Lewis (ed.), *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence, Volume 20* (London, 1960), p. 166.
- ⁷⁴ Godber, *Marchioness Grey*, p. 161.
- ⁷⁵ For the spelling of Brett's given name, of which different versions exist, I follow his own – Peircy – as it appears in several letters contained in British Library Add. MS 15955, ff. 173-83.
- ⁷⁶ 'Introduction' to Walter (comp.), *Voyage Round the World*.
- ⁷⁷ The design formed part of the collection of the late Earl of Aylesford at Packington Hall, but seems to have been lost in a fire in late 1979. An image of the design was published (before the fire) in Conner, *Oriental Architecture*, plate 22, but is difficult to make out properly. I have not been able to locate the photograph used for this publication.
- ⁷⁸ Elizabeth Anson to Jemima Grey, 20 August [1750], Bedfordshire & Luton Archives and Records Service L30/9/3/24, ff. 2r-3r.
- ⁷⁹ Thomas Pennant, *The Journey from Chester to London* (London, 1782), pp. 67-9.
- ⁸⁰ William Mavor, *The British Tourists; or Traveller's Pocket Companion, through England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland* (London, 1798), vol. 3, pp. 280-1.

⁸¹ William Pitt, *A Topographical History of Staffordshire* (Newcastle-under-Lyme, 1817), vol. 1, p. 445; Thomas Clifford and Arthur Clifford, *A Topographical and Historical Description of the Parish of Tixall, in the County of Stafford* (Paris, 1817), pp. 28, 65-6.

⁸² William White, *History, Gazetteer, and Directory, of Staffordshire, and the City and County of the City of Lichfield* (Sheffield, 1834), p. 626.

⁸³ Robert Garner, *The Natural History of the County of Stafford; comprising its Geology, Zoology, Botany, and Meteorology: also its Antiquities, Topography, Manufactures, etc.* (London, 1844), pp. 114-15.

⁸⁴ Oliver Impey, *Chinoiserie: The Impact of Oriental Styles on Western Art and Decoration* (London, 1977), p. 149; Honour, *Chinoiserie*, p. 151.

⁸⁵ J. Nightingale, *Staffordshire*, in John Britton and Edward Wedlake Brayley (eds), *The Beauties of England and Wales: or, Original Delineations, Topographical, Historical, and Descriptive, of each County*, Volume 13, Part 2: (London, 1813), p. 1088.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 1086-98.

⁸⁷ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, NC, 1993), p. 146.

⁸⁸ Staffordshire Records Office D615/P(S)/2/5/b. The attribution to Davies is based on the existence of a similar version by him published in Thomas Harwood (ed.), *A Survey of Staffordshire: Containing the Antiquities of that County, by Sampson Erdeswick, Esq.* (Westminster, 1820), pp. 154-5, in which the relevant lines read: 'Yet, while thou may'st enjoy & love the bow'r, / With soul sedate above the passing hour, / Behold thy oriental structures rise, / Though turban'd pride & sultans they despise; / From servile climes their Grecian arts demand, / And rear Athenian domes in Freedom's land'.

⁸⁹ Stewart, *On Longing*, p. 135.

⁹⁰ Hans Peter Hahn, 'Cultural Appropriation: Power, Transformation, and Tradition', in Christian Huck and Stefan Bauernschmidt (eds), *Travelling Goods, Travelling Moods: Varieties of Cultural Appropriation (1850-1950)* (Frankfurt, 2012), pp. 15-35.

⁹¹ Tim Richardson, *The Arcadian Friends: Inventing the English Landscape Garden* (London, 2007), p. 429.

⁹² Harris, 'Pioneer in Gardening', p. 228; Sloboda, *Chinoiserie*, p. 170.

⁹³ *The World*, vol. 1, no. 12 (22 March 1753), pp. 67-72. The author of this letter, signed simply 'H. S.', is unknown to me.

⁹⁴ Oliver Goldsmith, *The Citizen of the World; or Letters from a Chinese Philosopher, Residing in London, to his Friends in the East* (London, 1762), vol. 1, p. 50.

⁹⁵ Stephen McDowall, 'Shugborough: Seat of the Earl of Lichfield', *East India Company at Home* <http://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/eicah/files/2013/02/Shugborough-PDF-Final-19.08.14.pdf> (April 2013), p. 11.

⁹⁶ William Chambers, *Designs of Chinese Buildings, Furniture, Dresses, Machines and Utensils* (London, 1757), preface.

⁹⁷ Chambers himself attributes the design of this building to Joseph Goupy (*Plans, Elevations, Sections and Perspective Views of the Gardens and Buildings at Kew in Surry, the Seat of Her Royal Highness the Princess Dowager of Wales* (London, 1763), p. 4), although his own name appears on the accompanying plate. John Harris argues that Chambers himself designed this building and subsequently wished to distance his name from it on the basis of its rococo style ('Sir William Chambers and Kew Gardens', in John Harris and Michael Snodin (eds), *Sir William Chambers: Architect to George III* (New Haven, 1996) pp. 55-67). This is considered unlikely by Ray Desmond, who accepts the attribution to Goupy (*The History of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew*, second edition (Kew, 2007), p. 25).

⁹⁸ Sloboda, *Chinoiserie*, p. 182. On this theme see also Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the 'Improvement' of the World* (New Haven, 2000), pp. 37-49.

⁹⁹ Chambers, *Plans*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁰ Honour, *Chinoiserie*, pp. 154-5; Eileen Harris, 'Designs of Chinese Buildings and the *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening*', in John Harris, *Sir William Chambers: Knight of the Polar Star* (London, 1970), p. 148; Sloboda, *Chinoiserie*, p. 92.

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- ¹⁰¹ Impey, *Chinoiserie*, p. 146.
- ¹⁰² Sloboda, *Chinoiserie*, p. 193.
- ¹⁰³ Porter, *Ideographia*, p. 134.
- ¹⁰⁴ Sloboda, *Chinoiserie*, p. 7.
- ¹⁰⁵ Drayton, *Nature's Government*; Haun Saussy, 'Empires, Gardens, Collections: How Each Explains the Others', in Q. S. Tong, Wang Shouren and Douglas Kerr (eds), *Critical Zone 2: A Forum of Chinese and Western Knowledge* (Hong Kong, 2006), pp. 147-65.
- ¹⁰⁶ Chandra Mukerji, *Territorial Ambitions and the Gardens of Versailles* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 2.
- ¹⁰⁷ Stephen Switzer, *Ichonographia Rustica: or, the Nobleman, Gentleman, and Gardener's Recreation* (London, 1718), pp. 273-4.
- ¹⁰⁸ J. C. Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening; Comprising the Theory and Practice of Horticulture, Floriculture, Arboriculture, and Landscaping (A New Edition)* (London, 1834), p. 388.
- ¹⁰⁹ For a more detailed discussion of the role of ideology in Western views on Chinese gardens, see Craig Clunas, 'Nature and Ideology in Western Descriptions of the Chinese Garden', in Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn (ed.), *Nature and Ideology: Natural Garden Design in the Twentieth Century* (Washington DC, 1997), pp. 21-33.
- ¹¹⁰ John Barrow, *The Life of George Lord Anson* (London, 1839); McDowall, 'Shugborough Dinner Service', pp. 7-9.
- ¹¹¹ Porter, *Chinese Taste*, p. 6. Similarly, but in a different context, Srinivas Aravamudan has argued against reading that period as a 'pre-Orientalist' stage of development leading inexorably towards an imperialist end. See *Enlightenment Orientalism: Resisting the Rise of the Novel* (Chicago, 2012).
- ¹¹² Eugenia Zuroski Jenkins, *A Taste for China: English Subjectivity and the Prehistory of Orientalism* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 1-2.
- ¹¹³ W. J. T. Mitchell, 'Introduction' to idem (ed.), *Landscape and Power* (Chicago, 1994), pp. 1-4.
- ¹¹⁴ Batchelor, 'Concealing the Bounds'; Richardson, *Arcadian Friends*, pp. 368-71.

¹¹⁵ Clifford and Clifford, *Topographical and Historical Description*, p. 66. See also White, *History, Gazetteer, and Directory*, p. 626.

FIGURE CAPTIONS

Figure 1: The Chinese House at Shugborough, Staffordshire. c. 1747. © National Trust Images / Andrew Butler.

Figure 2: John Parnell (1744-1801). Sketch of the Chinese House at Shugborough. From 'Journal of a Tour thro' Wales and England, Anno 1769'. London School of Economics & Political Science Library Collections, Coll. Misc. 0038, vol. 1, f. 51v.

Figure 3: Moses Griffiths (1747-1819). *The Chinese House*. c. 1780. Shugborough, Staffordshire.

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